

'The Aesthetic Idol', *Washington Chronicle* (Washington, DC), 22 Jan. [1882]¹

Views and Impressions of the Capital City.

The aesthetic reporter of the CHRONICLE was ushered into the parlors of Oscar Wilde at the Arlington hotel last evening, and greeted cordially by that gentleman, whom he found reclining on a large sofa, covered with a buffalo robe, and smoking a cigarette. Mr. Wilde had just returned from his dinner, and was sitting easily, with one hand thrown back and the other supporting his head; before him on the table was a large dish of fruit. Mr. Wilde asked the knight of the lead-pencil to be seated, and then proceeded to give, at the reporter's request, his opinion of Washington as compared with the other cities he had already visited.

"Washington," replied the king of the aesthetes, "is free from the bustle and excitement, the gaudy signs, and the discordant noises of New York, and it is in many particulars more beautiful than that city. The view from the base of the Capitol rivals the sublime scenery of Venice." Mr. Wilde does not admire the Washington thoroughfares, as a street to be perfect aesthetically must be winding and narrow, the "casements upon the edifice on one side looking in, as it were, to those on the other." The public buildings are marred by a want of sculpture, a want which Mr. Wilde thinks will some day be supplied. The reporter inquired as to the way in which the immortal Oscar would spend his time in Washington, and was informed that extensive correspondence to England and to Philadelphia was occupying his attention, besides the preparation of a new lecture, to be delivered in the West, the subject of which he was not ready to make public. Mr. Wilde will leave Washington on Tuesday evening for Baltimore, thence he goes to Albany, New York., then to Boston, where he will remain for several days prior to starting for the West.

The distinguished reformer talked fluently upon the various differences between America and the older countries, and expressed surprise and pleasure at finding this country so great and ready a field for the revolutions in art and taste which he proposes to introduce.

1. Included in Colonel Morse's scrapbook from Oscar Wilde's tour of America (British Library, Add MS 81822, f. 65).